NOAA Web Update June 10, 2010
DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident

Situation: Wednesday 10 June —

The 'top hat' containment cap installed on June 3 continues to collect oil and gas flowing from the MC252 well and transporting it to a drillship on the surface. The efficiency of the containment operation is improving, with oil collection reaching 17,000 barrels/day today. The transfer of crude oil from the drillship to the barge *Massachusetts* began the morning of June 9. When the process is complete, the barge will transport the oil to an onshore terminal. The transfer will free up space on the drillship to collect more oil from the well.

Work on the first relief well continues and has currently reached a depth of 13,978 feet. The second relief well is at 8,576 feet. The target depth for the wells is around 18,000 feet, which should be reached in August. The relief wells should stop any remaining oil and gas flow from the well into the Gulf of Mexico.

Almost 3,600 vessels are involved in the response effort, including skimmers, tugs, barges, and recovery vessels. Operations to skim oil from the surface of the water now have recovered, in total, approximately 383,000 barrels (16.1 million gallons) of oily liquid.

Response

In the nearshore zone, onshore (SE/SSE) winds are forecast to continue through Friday at 10 knots or less. Persistent southwesterly winds last week resulted in northward movement of the oil towards the Mississippi/Alabama barrier islands and westward movement along the Florida Panhandle. Models show alongshore currents becoming more westward over the next few days, inhibiting further eastward movement. However, coastal regions in Mississippi Sound west of Pensacola may continue to experience oiling on shorelines. The change to persistent southeasterly winds is also resulting in movement of oil towards Chandeleur and Breton Sound and the Mississippi Delta.

Offshore, satellite imagery analysis continues to indicate possible patches of sheen to the SE of the main slick. Scattered sheens and tar balls observed in these regions may be getting entrained into the northern edge of the large clockwise eddy (Eddy Franklin) that has pinched off the main Loop Current (LC). Trajectories indicate that some of these sheens may continue southward along the eastern edge of Eddy Franklin, whereas some may be getting entrained into a counterclockwise eddy to the NE of the main LC eddy. A USCG overflight off the west coast of Florida saw no oil. Satellite imagery from yesterday saw a possible sheen SE of the source. Uncertainty of this anomaly was medium to high.

Closures

NOAA Fisheries Service is not modifying the fishery closure in the Gulf of Mexico today. Any changes to the closure are announced daily at 12 p.m. Eastern at sero.nmfs.noaa.gov and take effect at 6 p.m. Eastern the same day.

Sea Turtles and Marine Mammals (effective June 9, 2010)

A total of 331 sea turtles have been verified from April 30 to June 9 within the designated spill area. (The designated spill area for sea turtles and marine mammals is from the Texas/Louisiana border to Apalachicola, Florida.) Between Tuesday, June 8 and Wednesday, June 9, nine turtle strandings were verified, including one dead oiled turtle from Louisiana, one live turtle from Louisiana that is being examined for evidence of oil, five dead turtles from Mississippi, and one live, unoiled turtle caught on a hook and line in Florida and released. Thirty heavily oiled sea turtles have been captured in the on-water turtle search and rescue operation by NOAA, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other partners working under the Wildlife Branch of the Unified Command. Twenty- five of those captured turtles are in rehabilitation at Audubon Aquarium outside New Orleans. Two turtles were collected dead, and three captured alive subsequently died at the aquarium. A total of 38 stranded or captured turtles have had visible evidence of external oil. These include the 30 captured turtles from the on-water operation, four live stranded sea turtles (two caught in skimming operations) and four dead stranded sea turtles. All others have not had visible evidence of external oil.

Of the 331 turtles verified from April 30 to June 9, a total of 277 stranded turtles were found dead, and 24 stranded alive. Three of those subsequently died. Four live stranded turtles have been released, including two that were found in Mississippi and released after rehabilitation in Florida, and one caught on a hook and line in Florida where it was released. There are 42 turtles in rehabilitation. Turtle strandings during this time period have been higher in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama than in previous years for this same time period. This may be due in part to increased detection and reporting, but this does not fully account for the increase.

From April 30 to June 9, 38 stranded dolphins have been verified in the designated spill area. Of this, 36 dolphins stranded dead and two stranded alive. One died on the beach and another that stranded in Florida was euthanized. So far, two of the 38 stranded dolphins had evidence of external oil. However, we are unable at this time to determine whether the animals were externally oiled before or after death. Since April 30, the stranding rate for dolphins in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama has been higher than the historic numbers for the same time period in previous years. In part, this may be due to increased detection and reporting and the lingering effects of an earlier observed spike in strandings for the winter of 2010. A stranding is defined as a dead or debilitated animal that washes ashore or is found in the water.

Assessment

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) is conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (PDF, 89 K). The focus currently is to assemble existing data on resources and their habitats and collect baseline (pre-spill impact) data. Data on oiled resources and habitats are also being collected.